

slanderer who is no better than a brute.” In light of increasing hatred towards Manly, J. Wesley Yarborough, a black leader in Wilmington, cautioned that support of Manly might reduce donations by whites to black churches.¹⁰

Wilmington papers picked up the article and ran sections of it as an example of a “Horrid Slander” against the virtuous white women of Wilmington and North Carolina. The papers reprinted similar comments about the article on a daily basis, and each issue featured multiple references to the “vile” and “villainous” editor of the *Record*. The *News and Observer* then picked up the article and added its own spin to the firestorm surrounding Manly. Because Manly’s article pointed more to rural women than to those in cities, North Carolina Democrats saw in it an opportunity to draw into the campaign rural men who would otherwise be indifferent to the happenings in a coastal city. As a result of so much attention being given to the article and race relations, reporters from across the country flocked to Wilmington.¹¹

Democrats made effective use of the article with its implications of miscegenation and threats to white men’s control over white women, black women,

and black men. Because the editorial became such an easily identifiable touchstone for the campaign, many used it as justification for violence that followed the election. Other Democrats joined in attacks on Manly. Near the end of October, Senator Ben Tillman from South Carolina, who helped to organize Red Shirt activities, spoke at a rally in Fayetteville: “Why didn’t you kill that nigger editor who wrote that? Send him to South Carolina and let him publish any such offensive stuff, and he would be killed.” Tillman continued his rant at another rally in Charlotte just before the election: “In South Carolina no negro editor could slander the white women of the State as that Wilmington negro did. That negro ought now to be food for catfish in the bottom of the Cape Fear River instead of going around above ground.”¹²

Response of Wilmington’s Non-Democrats and African Americans

Non-Democratic white members of Wilmington were thoroughly intimidated by the Democratic Party. Governor Russell and leading Fusionist politicians were in fear for their lives, and rank-and-file Fusionists gave in to pressure to rejoin the Democratic Party. Although Democratic Party papers took pride in successfully disarming Fusionists, they did not relent in their barrage of attacks and continued to print inflammatory articles.

Wilmington’s Board of Aldermen tried to meet and carry on their business in the best interest of the city, with every move monitored in the papers. One action of the Board of Aldermen was to close bars and saloons in the days surrounding the election—from midday Saturday, November 5 until early morning on November 10.

¹⁰ Democrats replied to Republican rejections of Manly’s participation in the party by pointing out that he was nominated deputy register of deeds under Republican rule of the city and that his employees were all Republicans, particularly John T. Howe, who had served as a Republican representative to the General Assembly in 1897. *Morning Star*, (Wilmington), August 25, 26, 31, 1898; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 106-7; Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 73; *Wilmington Messenger*, September 4, 16, 1898.

¹¹ Reporters from the *Washington Post*, *New York Herald*, *New York Times*, *Baltimore Sun*, *Atlanta Constitution*, *Charlotte Daily Observer*, and the *Richmond Times* all visited Wilmington during the height of the campaign against Manly. *Morning Star*, (Wilmington), August, 1898; *Wilmington Messenger*, August, 1898.

¹²Ben Tillman as quoted in McDuffie, “Politics in Wilmington,” 593; *Wilmington Messenger*, October 22, 1898; *News and Observer*, (Raleigh), November 5, 1898.